

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:
 - providing an electronic lock for said safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed;
 - providing a control unit external to said safe and coupled to said electronic lock for ~~continual communications~~ communication between the control unit and the electronic lock;
 - said control unit ~~continually~~ monitoring said transactions with said electronic lock to allow a determination to be made through the control unit that a transaction has been performed;
 - receiving signals at said electronic lock from said control unit; and
 - controlling said safe remotely from the safe in response to said signals to perform a transaction without requiring intervention by a user of the safe at the safe.
2. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of sending an unlock signal to said electronic lock from said control unit.
3. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein said step of sending an unlock signal comprises sending an unlock signal after receiving a user ID and a PIN.
4. (original) The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of encrypting said PIN.
5. (original) The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of saving at least a portion of said signals in an audit database.
6. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein said step of receiving signals at said electronic lock comprises receiving said signals from a remotely located computer.

7. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of sending signals from said electronic lock to said control unit.

8. (currently amended) A method of controlling a safe with an access door, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic lock for said safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed;

providing a control unit external to said safe for ~~continually~~ monitoring said transactions with said electronic lock to allow a determination to be made through the control unit that a transaction has been performed;

receiving login information at said control unit external to said safe;

enabling a user to select an open door option; and

providing ~~signals~~ a signal from said control unit to said electronic lock in response to the selection of said open door option to cause the electronic lock to be operated to open the door without requiring intervention by a user of the safe at the safe.

9. (original) The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of saving said login information in a database.

10. (original) The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open door option comprises displaying an open door on said control unit.

11. (previously amended) The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open door option comprises providing a predetermined location on said control unit for enabling the user to select the open door option.

12. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein said step of providing a predetermined location comprises providing a secret location on a computer screen.

13. (original) The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open door option comprises enabling entry of an override response key.

14. (original) The method of claim 8 wherein said step of receiving login information on said control unit comprises receiving a user ID and a PIN.

15. (original) The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of encrypting at least a portion of said login information.

16. (original) The method of claim 15 further comprising a step of saving said portion of said login information in a database.

17. (currently amended) A method of controlling a safe having a door, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic lock for said safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed;

providing a control unit external to said safe for ~~continually~~ monitoring said transactions with said electronic lock to allow a determination to be made through the control unit that a transaction has been performed:

receiving a user ID and a PIN at said control unit external to said safe;

enabling a user to select an open door option displayed on said control unit;

encrypting said PIN;

saving said user ID and an encrypted PIN in a database; and

providing an unlock signal from said control unit to said electronic lock in response to the selection of said open door option if said user ID and PIN are valid to cause the electronic lock to be operated to open the door without requiring intervention by a user of the safe at the safe.

18. (currently amended) A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic lock for said safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed;

providing a control unit external to said safe for ~~continually~~ monitoring said transactions with said electronic lock to allow a determination to be made through the control unit that a transaction has been performed.

providing signals from said control unit to said safe;

coupling said signals to said electronic lock; and

unlocking said safe in response to said signals without requiring intervention by a user of the safe at the safe.

19. (original) The method of claim 18 further including a step of receiving login information at said control unit.

20. (original) The method of claim 19 wherein said step of receiving login information on said control unit comprises receiving a user ID and a PIN.

21. (original) The method of claim 19 further comprising a step of saving said login information in a database.

22. (original) The method of claim 18 further including a step of displaying an open door option on said control unit.

23. (previously amended) The method of claim 22 wherein said step of displaying a open door option comprises selecting a secret location on a computer display for unlocking said safe.

24. (previously amended) The method of claim 23 further comprising a step of receiving login information after said secret location is selected on said computer display.

25. (original) The method of claim 18 wherein said step of providing signals comprises providing an unlock signal to said safe from a remote computer.

26. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising a step of providing a status of said electronic lock to said control unit.

27. (currently amended) An apparatus for controlling a safe, said apparatus comprising:

an electronic lock incorporated in said safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed;

an input/output port coupled to said electronic lock;

a control unit external to said safe coupled to said input/output port for continually monitoring said transactions with said electronic lock to allow a determination to be made through the control unit that a transaction has been performed; and

a control signal received at said input/output port from said control unit remotely from the safe for controlling said electronic lock without requiring intervention by a user of the safe at the safe.

28. (original) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein said control unit comprises a computer.

29. (original) The apparatus of claim 28 wherein said computer comprises a remote computer coupled to said input/output port by way of a communication network.

30. (original) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said remote computer further comprises a communication circuit.

31. (original) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said remote computer further comprises a memory.


32. (original) The apparatus of claim 31 wherein said memory comprises a database having encrypted PIN information.

33. (original) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said electronic lock further comprises a communication circuit.

34. (currently amended) A system for controlling a safe, said apparatus comprising:

an electronic lock means for controlling said safe;

an input/output means coupled to said electronic lock means for receiving signals;

 a control unit means external to said safe and coupled to said input/output means for [continually] monitoring operation of said electronic lock to allow a determination to be made through the control unit that a transaction has been performed and for providing signals to said electronic lock;

a signal received at said input/output means from said control unit means for controlling said safe without requiring intervention by a user of the safe at the safe; and

a memory coupled to said control unit means for storing monitored information received by said control unit means in an audit trail database.
